(b) if so, whether in the first five months of this fiscal, India's exports to US are estimated at $ 5.47 billion against $ 5.02 billion are same period last year;

(c) whether India achieved share of 1 per cent of total US imports in 2002 and improved its ranking from being the 22nd largest supplier to the American market to the 19th largest supplier.

(d) if so, the incentives that Government have assured to the exporters; and

(e) to what extent, these assurances would improve exports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) Yes, Sir. India's merchandise trade with USA has steadily increased since 1998 to 2002 except in the year 2001 when it declined by 5.9% from the previous year.

(b) Yes, Sir. In the first five months of fiscal year 2003-04, India's merchandise exports to USA are estimated at US $ 5.47 billion as compared to US $ 5.02 billion in the same period last year.

(c) Yes, Sir. India has achieved a share of 1.02% of total US merchandise imports in 2002 and was the 19th largest supplier to US market.

(d) and (e) The Government's efforts to expand Indo-US trade are a sustained and continous process. Besides, promoting India's export to USA in general and identifying products with good export potential, efforts are made to break into new areas Special emphasis is given to developing new and fast growing areas, such as information technology and biotechnology, promoting exports through participation in major trade shows and specific trade promotion events, apart from streamlining the information and data base. Close monitoring is done of important bilateral trade related issues in liaison with US Authorities.

Tea Industry in Assam

*298.'SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the tea industry in the country especially in Assam has been faced with the worst ever crisis resulting

in closure of tea-gardens, unemployment of tea-labourers and at times consequential violence; and

(b) if so, the measures Government have already taken/propose to take in future to save the tea industry from inevitable disaster?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY)! (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government has already taken a number of measures to help the Indian tea industry including that in Assam to tide over the present situation, which include:

- Expert Committees were appointed to make an in-depth study of the closed tea gardens in the States of West Bengal, Kerala, Assam and Tripura and to suggest a package of measures for their viability and revival. Based on the recommendations of the Expert Committees, Government have facilitated discussions by the management of the closed tea gardens, which have been identified as potentially viable, with their bankers to work out a revival package. The financial package for the revival of the gardens would include promoters' contribution, the concerned Banks advancing further loans against collateral securities with restructuring of the entire account and assistance from the Central Government in the form of interest subsidy upto a maximum of 5%.
- A special Fund has been created for the development, modernisation and rehabilitation of the tea plantation sector by replacing the excise duty of Re. 1/kg on tea by an additional duty of excise of Re 1/- per kg as a surcharge. Various developmental schemes are being prepared for implementation through the Fund for the benefit of the tea sector.
- Concerned with the fall in auction prices of tea, which is not getting reflected in the retail prices, the Government notified the Tea Marketing Control Order (TMCO), 2003 on 1.1.2003 in supersession of TMCO, 1984 and effected changes in the auction rules to provide for a more transparent price discovery mechanism for tea.

- The prevailing import duty on items of machinery used to improve productivity/quality of the plantation crops (including tea) and encourage value addition has been reduced to an all inclusive rate of 5%.
- A Price Stabilisation Fund with an initial corpus of Rs. 500 crores has been established for providing relief to the small growers of plantation commodities such as tea, coffee, rubber and tobacco.
- The allowance under Section 33AB of Income Tax Act has been increased from 20% to 40% in the Budget 2001-02 to encourage profit making units to go in for rejuvenation and replantation of their gardens and also modernisation of machinery.
- Tea Board is implementing a number of developmental Schemes during the 10th Five Year Plan for enhancing productivity, quality and marketability of tea produced in the country. An outlay of Rs. 350 crores has been provided in the Tenth Plan for Tea Board for this purpose.
- A factory upgradation Scheme is being implemented by the Tea Board to encourage production of good quality teas in the country. A quality awareness programme for upgrading the quality of tea produced by small grower segment is also being implemented.
- Financial incentives are being provided to the exporters of tea for meeting part of cost of handling, packaging, transport/freight charges and value addition cost. Financial assistance is also being extended for tea exports through the dry port at Amingaon.

Heavy Industries Run by Government

†*299. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of HEAVY INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES be pleased to state:

(a) whether forty-nine heavy industries are being run by Government;

(b) if not, the actual number thereof, category-wise;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.